

*The present Character of the Children of
the Kingdom: And their future Happi-
ness considered,*

I N A
S E R M O N

Preached at the

F U N E R A L

O F

Mrs. *Martha Bunny,*
of A N D O V E R.

Who Died *January* the 4th 172⁶.

By DAVID MILLAR, M. A.

L O N D O N :

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The present Character of the Kingdom
The Kingdom of England
and Scotland

SERMON

FUNERAL

OF

Mrs. Mary Bunning
of A. R. R.



Who Died January the 4th 1775

By David Millar, M. A.

London

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T O

Mr. Jacob and Mr. Joseph Bunny.

My FRIENDS,

AS the sickness and death of an aged serious mother, is a season of sorrow, so should it be of reflection. Afflictive providences should move and awaken, even when at a distance; but much more when they come nearer home. We can hardly forbear sympathy and tears, when we see any of our own species brought so low; but the dying groans of a parent, must needs go to the heart. When God speaks to us in this manner, it is our duty to hear and ponder. I hope you will remember that providence hath been using various means with both of you, to put you upon considering your *latter end*; in giving and taking away children, one a few months, the other a few days before your mother. It becomes you to think seriously of that which brought death into the world; *sin entered into it, and death by sin, and so death hath passed upon all, because all have sinned.* Infants die, therefore Infants have sinned. If the Apostles reason be just, the consequence is infallible. You have ground to be thankful, that when you meditate upon this melancholy subject, you may also, with joy, reflect on the great contrivance of infinite wisdom, in sending a Saviour into the world, to save his people from their sins, and all the effects of them; and that we have good hopes that the children of believing parents, as well as believers themselves,

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shall be saved by him. Your great duty is to make sure to your selves an interest in CHRIST. If you do so, in life and in death all shall be well.

A life of faith in the son of God, is the only life of safety, ease, quiet, hope, and joy. The unbeliever is never safe, must needs be a stranger to ease, can have no quiet but such as a condemned criminal has when asleep, hath no solid ground of hope, and must be destitute of all joy, but that which is more truly called madness. But the sound christian whose faith hath discovered it self by bringing forth the fruits of the spirit, is safe in times of danger, may be easy under troubles, quiet in the midst of changes, has good reason to hope (even against hope) when all things look gloomy, and may be joyful under sickness and the prospect of death. Much of this we saw and heard from your mother; and to recommend the same sure foundations of peace and hope to others, which all true believers have solely in the merits and sacrifice of our only redeemer, was the reason why the following text was chosen for the subject of her funeral sermon, and why the discourse it self is now published at your desire.

I have enlarged much upon the explication of the parable of the tares of the field, and added several paragraphs, which (because the time was short) I passed over in the delivery; but have not omitted a single sentence, no nor one word, lest those, whether within or without doors, who came not to be edified, but to carry something away, might say, that *I was afraid to see that in print, which I had spoken in the pulpit.*

The doctrines I have pleaded for, are clearly, fully, and frequently expressed in the scriptures of truth, in many more places than those referred to. I have imposed no strange, forced, unnatural glosses upon the texts cited, but left them to speak for themselves. The truths here delivered, were, indeed, the principles of the reformation, as may be seen in the confessions of the churches of Christ; and whether any open receding from them be not, in effect, a betraying of the reformation, if the nature of things, and daily experience do not too abundantly

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abundantly shew, I am afraid the event will. They are now, indeed, much decried under the name of *Calvinism*, by those especially who think, that the venerable and blessed names of *Arius*, *Pelagius*, or *Socinus*, have been and are more honourable among the churches of CHRIST, than *Calvin's*. Let me put you in mind, that (how much soever they may be despised,) they are interwoven with all the foundations of our faith, do manifestly arise out of them, and cannot subsist without them; yea, that they mutually suppose and support each other. And it is observed, that the men who have deserted those doctrines of christianity, upon which all the rest are built, have also set themselves to run down those more strictly called Calvinistical. For my own part, there is one thing which, tho' perhaps not much regarded, has ever from my youth, made me like these principles the better; and assured me, that if CHRIST had a church upon earth in these latter days, it was chiefly among those who had adhered to these doctrines: It is this: *That of all the witnesses for our Lord under Anti-christ, in these last ages; of all them who have been exiled or massacred, sent to dungeons or galley's, drawn to gibbets or stakes, for the testimony of JESUS, perhaps nine parts in ten have been Calvinists.*

You are members of a congregation, who justly deserve to be praised, for their unanimous and steady adherence to these, and other articles of our faith, of the last importance to the glory of God and to the souls of men: and that in a time and place, where they have been undermined with more low and mean design, and opposed with more visible malice and fury, than any where in *England*. You know how unwearied some have been, many years before I knew you, to break and divide you, even by the most vile methods: and what pains have been taken, by all manner of means, when *the old* were not to be moved, to overturn the faith of *the young*? But thro' the goodness of God you have yet kept the faith; the church enjoys as much peace, and are perhaps more unanimous, than for many years past; and we have seen in several instances, and still

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still may see, the providence of God strangely blasting the most secret intrigues, and the most violent opposition. These things should not be forgotten.

I shall conclude with observing, that the principles here defended, in the experience of all that believe have been, and will be found, to be best calculated to give peace to distressed consciences at all times; best suited to the spirit, privileges, and duties of the gospel; the best excitations to the exercise of all our graces, especially faith, hope, and love; the best encouragements to steadiness in our profession; the best relief under all sorts of opposition; the best motives to universal holiness; and what gives the greatest quiet and comfort under the views of death. That God may bless them to you, and the congregation, and all that believe them, and make them effectual for these happy purposes, is the most hearty prayer of

Your servant, for the sake of our dear Redeemer,



DAV. MILLAR.

MATTH.

MATTH. XIII. Ver. 43.

Then shall the Righteous shine forth as the Sun, in the Kingdom of their Father. Who hath Ears to hear, let him hear.



THE serious thoughts of a future, fixed, eternal State of happiness or misery, are of all others the most awakening and affecting both to the good and the bad. How dreadful are the apprehensions of the worm that never dieth, and of the fire that is never quenched (a), to the guilty, convinced, christless sinners? in the midst of outward prosperity, they interrupt his quiet, damp his mirth, turn his laughter into mourning, and his joy into heaviness. In adversity of any kind, they are the bitterest ingredient in his cup; but at death they must needs be overwhelming. Oh how are such filled with fear, remorse, horror, and despondency, when they groan out those melancholy words, *Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings (b)?* On the other hand, what a spring-tide of joy ariseth to the true believer, from a prospect of eternal life, of fulness of joy in the presence of God, and of pleasures for evermore at his right-hand (c)? The thoughts of it are the most powerful motives to watchfulness against sin, unshaken constancy in the faith, steadiness in our profession and work against all opposition, and unwearied diligence in universal obedience and holiness: and the hope of this happiness, is the best support under affliction, misery, pain, and indisposition. What satisfaction is it to the honest christian under troubles that they shall not last away? what relief under sickness and death, that they shall soon be over, and that glory, honour, and immortality shall then immediately commence? well may the dying Saint say to his soul, *Soul, thou hast happiness laid up for eternity: be not therefore dismayed, Now is thy salvation nearer than when thou didst believe (d); look up, the day of thy redemption draweth nigh (e).* Be not therefore afraid to leave thy body, it shall

(a) Mark ix. 44. (b) Is. xxxiii. 14. (c) Psal. xvi. 11. (d) Rom. xiii. 11. (e) Luke xxi. 28.

sleep in the grave which Christ hath sanctified for it ; where it shall be free from this and all other pain, *for there the weary are at rest*. Even death, *the last enemy shall be destroyed* (a), and thou shalt hereafter have a compleat victory over it. Let me therefore, as I have *lived by faith in the son of God*, so die in the same faith ; let me patiently wait for my release ; let me die glorifying my Saviour, *committing my departing soul into his hands* (b). He hath redeemed it, *and will present it to himself without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing* (c). I have indeed no righteousness of mine own upon which I dare rely, for *all my righteousnesses are as filthy rags*. I have renounced all, *that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ*, which I became possessor of by believing in him (d). He *hath clothed me with the robe of righteousness* (e), in which I shall appear with confidence and joy, be acknowledged and acquitted by him in whom I have believed, which was, as far as we could judge, the case of our deceased friend Mrs. Bunney, and the reason why the words read, were chosen for the subject of this discourse.

I am not called to minister to *strife and contention, or to smite with the fist of wickedness*, which would be very unsuitable on such an occasion. Nor shall I entertain you with *new and strange doctrines*, which, thro' the Goodness of God were *unknown* to our fathers, and which they would have heard with grief and horror. No, what you are to hear exactly harmonizes with all the confessions of *all the reformed churches*, and particularly with the *articles* of the church of England, which I most heartily embrace ; and with the *known* doctrine of Protestant divines, many years after the *blessed Reformation*. Much less am I to act a *Farce*, to fill even them who neither see nor hear me with laughter or scorn ; but shall leave such a part to those, who by accustoming themselves to such kind of work, may, by this time, for ought I know, be pretty expert, at these performances. But my business is to *preach the gospel of Christ occasionally*, and to improve this opportunity, for the edification of all concerned.

(a) 1 Cor. xv. 26.
iii. 9.

(b) Acts vii. 59.
(c) 1st. lxi. 10.

(c) Eph. v. 27. (d) Phil.

It was a good old rule which was given to preachers, that what they deliver should not only be *Truth*, for otherwise their discourses would rather hurt, than profit their hearers; but that it should be *Veritas Loci, the Truth of the Place*, else they had as good not read a text. We shall therefore carefully but briefly consider the context, that we may more certainly find out the scope and meaning of the passage.

The words read are the conclusion of our Lord's explication of the parable of *the tares of the field*, which he put forth unto the multitude from verse 24th to 31st of this chapter. It seems this parable had much affected the disciples, who therefore desire a more particular declaration of it, verse 36, saying nothing of the two subsequent ones.

The scope of the parable, is to shew, that our Saviour himself and Gospel-ministers after him, were to sow *the good seed*, to preach *the word of truth*, in all places whithersoever providence should send them; which should have a good effect on some every where, thro' all ages, renewing their natures, reforming their lives, working them into a conformity to it, and producing agreeable, proportionable fruit; whereas the *grand enemy* would not fail to take a proper season, to sow *erroneous opinions* and *damnable heresies*, leading men from the truth, and the practice of Gospel-holiness; and that under a profession of the name of Christ, and a pretence to advance his interests; which would prove trying and offensive to true believers, as well as destructive to themselves. That it was not his will to hinder Satan from exciting men to broach and defend such errors; that they which are approved might be made manifest (a). And therefore that the church should never be wholly free from erroneous persons and hypocrites in this world, but that he would make an open publick distinction at last. To be more particular,

The sower, is *the son of man*, verse 37, he is the first, the chief seed's man in the field of the church. *The great salvation at the first began to be spoken by the Lord*, Heb. ii. 3. But as the parable is a representation of the state of the visible church in all ages, we are also by this sower to understand all those whom he sends forth to preach the Gospel, to whom he gives

(a) 1 Cor. xi. 19.

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his Spirit, whom he makes faithful, enabling them to teach the same truths, which he himself taught, and to the same end; whether they be sent to preach where the good seed was never sown before them, or to sow after others. What such teach, is *in Christ's stead*, 2 Cor. v. 20. And *they that refuse or reject the word from them, reject it from him*, Luke x. 16. Joh. xiii. 20. As for those who pretend to preach in the name of Christ, but deliver for *doctrines* any thing without his commission, or that is beside or contrary to the doctrines he taught, they do any thing rather than sow the good seed.

The *field*, is *the world*, ver. 38. not the *Jewish church* only, which was confined within the narrow precincts of a small country, to which *alone* the *Jews* groundlessly fancied the church of God was, and should be limited: but the *Catholic church*, which in New Testament times was to be extended to all nations, countries, and kingdoms without distinction, wheresoever the Holy Ghost should send any seed's men. Not all the Regions of the earth at once, but all where the good seed is sown. [This may explain to us the meaning of the words, *world*, the *whole world*, in many places of the *Gospels* and *Epistles*, about which there has been so many disputes. They neither signify *the world containing*, nor *the world contained*, i. e. all and every individual man or nation in it. But all people, tribes and countries indifferently, as they are contradistinguished from the nation of *the Jews*.] If this is not allowed, we must grant that this parable is not a representation of the visible church in all ages, but respects some state of it, which is not yet come; for the word of the kingdom has never as far as appears been preached to *one half* of the people of the world at the same time, and at present it is hardly known to *one fifth part*. But it is evident that our Lord's design is to shew, that wheresoever a visible church is gathered by the preaching of the doctrine of the Gospel, there is *the field*, and all the churches together is *the world*.

The *good seed*, is that which the great sower at first sowed, which in its own nature is suited to bring forth fruit, which is still the same through all ages. This, as we may certainly learn from another parable in this chapter, is *the word of the kingdom*, ver. 19. the Gospel of Christ, pure, and unadulterate without any addition, mixture, or alteration. This is *the only mean* of
regeneration,

regeneration, sanctification, and salvation. The elect are begotten with, by, or through the word of truth, James i. ver. 18. The regenerate are sanctified only through truth, 1st John vii. ver. 17. And the means to salvation, are the sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth, 2 Thess. ii. ver. 13. It is evident from the scriptures, as well as from the nature of things, that nothing but truth can produce any fruit, which the gospel calls good. Nor is it to be expected, that the Holy Ghost will ever bless any means to such an end, but those only which God hath appointed. But error and falsehood are no means of his appointing. In the explanation, our Lord tells us, that the good seed are the children of the kingdom, ver. 38. considering it not only as sown, but as sprung up, and bearing fruit, thereby explaining all these circumstances in one. The children of the kingdom are those who receive and believe the truth, that are begotten and born again, by the incorruptible seed, the word of God, 1 Pet. i. ver. 23. who are sanctified, enlivened and excited by it, to fruitfulness both in faith and holiness, and are thereby manifested to be the true children of the kingdom; seeing they are growing up into a meetness for glory. The bare receiving and assenting to, yea, the disputing for the word of the gospel is not a sufficient ground to denominate any the true children of the kingdom. Those only are, indeed, such who keep the word, and in whom it bringeth forth fruit of the same kind with the seed. Wheat produceth wheat.

The tares are also seed, seed sown in the field of the church, seed apt to bring forth fruit; the nature of the parable and common sense suppose this. But this seed is of a kind contrary to the good seed, and destructive of it, and consequently bringeth forth different fruit. Tares produce tares. The seeds are as opposite as truth to falsehood, and their fruits as different as holiness from iniquity. These tares then are heresies and false doctrines, inconsistent with and contrary to the truths of the gospel; whether they are erroneous explications of, or deductions from the word of God, or additions to it, under any pretext; whereby the good seed is hindered as to its use and end, and which naturally and necessarily produce other kind of fruit. We do not think that every mistake as to the sense of a text, or every error in lesser things, which do little

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affect the substance of faith, or change the nature of our obedience, are the *tares*. But those opinions, which overthrow the faith, or render it vain, by *laying another foundation than that which is laid*. 1 Cor. iii. 11, 12. or building upon the *true foundation*, what tends to overturn it, make it useless, or lead men quite from it, and so introduce a *strange faith*, and teach a *kind of obedience*, which, either in matter or manner, principle or end, is utterly opposite to *the obedience of faith* (a) required in the gospel: These are the tares. In the explication *the tares* are call'd *the children of the wicked one*, ver. 38. Our Lord here also considers the *tares*, not only as sown, but springing and bearing fruit after their kind, and so explains all these Circumstances together, in this character. *The tares* that are sown are of *the devil*, who when he speaketh a lie, speaketh of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it. John viii. ver. 44. And they that receive *this seed*, entertain it, regulate their faith, hearts, and lives by it, are moulded into the very *image of the wicked one*. For his seed can bring forth nothing in heart or life, but an assimilation to him and it. Therefore are they of *their Father the devil*. The tares may be received and remembered, yet if they do not appear springing up in the heart or conversation, men are not from them denominated the children of the wicked one. *These tares*, and they in whom they grow up, had some resemblance to the *good seed*. They professed the gospel, were called by the name of Christ, would take it very ill if others would not allow them to be *christians*, they would pretend to dispute for Christ, with less shame, and perhaps with more courage than others, and to ground all their opinions upon *his word*; yea would hardly allow any thing for the *good seed*, which cannot be express'd in the *very words of God*, tho' they themselves take the privilege to make *any thing* or *nothing* of *his words*, as they please. But after all, they had nothing of the *good seed* in them, but a distant likeness only. *The tares* are wholly and entirely opposite to it, in their nature, and consequently in their effects. The faith of such is not the *faith of God's elect*. Tit. i. v. 1. and their practice, which is founded upon their principles,

(a) 2 Tim. ii. ver. 18. 1 Cor. xv. ver. 14. 17. Rom. xvi. 26.

must needs be agreeable to them. For all *obedience* which ariseth or proceedeth from any thing called *faith*, doth draw so much of its nature from it, that as *this* is, so is *that*. True Faith is the rule and principle of gospel *holiness*, but it is impossible a *false Faith* should. *Heresies* do naturally and necessarily produce *hypocrites and self-deceivers*, professing themselves to be what they are not. I do not say that all who receive the *tares* act against their consciences, God only knows whether they do or not, and how far they are guilty this way. But *they call themselves christians, and are not, but do lie, (a) deceiving and destroying themselves.*

But if any doubt whether this explication be good, let them carefully observe these things which are evident in the parable, and the explication of it; which I believe will be sufficient to satisfy them. *These tares, were seed, naturally apt to bring forth fruit, as well as the good seed. That they were sown in the visible church after the other. That they grew up in it, even when it remained the church. That therefore they were seed pretending to be religious seed, and were sown under this pretext. That they produced fruit after their kind. That between them and the good there was some sort of resemblance. That the servants seem to have thought, that they were under their inspection and jurisdiction, and that they were not to be rooted up, lest through mistake the good seed should be rooted up with them.*

The sower of these tares, is called *the enemy*, ver. 39. *his enemy*, ver. 25. The enemy of the blessed sower of the good seed and of the souls of men. This is *the devil; the tares are his seed*, and of *his sowing*, whatever men may think or say. This shews what hand *Satan* has in all the *Heresies*, wherewith the church has been torn *like the lilly among the thorns (b)*. The devil is more active than can well be imagined, to raise opposition in men to *the truths of God*. It is he who puts notions into mens heads, and fills their minds with *objections, cavils*, strange and strained *glosses*, suggesting many specious things to them, which are agreeable enough to their carnal *conceptions and inclinations*, and suitable to *the darkness* that is in them. It is he, who prompts them, by

(1) Rev. iii. 9. (2) Cant. ii. 2.

working upon their *ignorance, pride, vanity, natural enmity to the truth, and other lusts*, to set themselves against the truth and the professors of it. It is true, the minds of men are naturally wonderful fertile in framing, contriving, and coining *cavils*, raising and pushing *objections* against *gospel truths*. And when once their hearts are set at liberty, from *that reverence and subjection* they should be under to the word of God, under *the false notion* of enquiring for *truth*, there is no end of *sophisms*. Seldom are people, in these circumstances, without a numberless number of *questions, suppositions, doubts, exceptions*, and other such kind of *arguments*, to oppose *the mysteries* of our religion. But Satan may be, and is very *busy* and *efficacious* in these men; and not only the first *notions*, but the *vehemence, fury*, or extraordinary *concern*, which they shew in spreading and defending them, is, in a great measure, from him. By these means they are ensnared of the devil, and *taken captive at his will*, 2 Tim. ii. ver. 26. which words are spoken of men free from all known, open wickedness, as far as appears, but their dangerous errors and their consequences. Whoever then are *the under seeds-men*, or however they may be cried up, for their real or supposed extraordinary *abilities*; yet *Satan is the chief sower*. And those who are employed in that work, are but his *wicked tools* in opposing *the truth*, spreading *his tares*, and offending *the children of the kingdom*.

Having sown *the tares*, *the sower went his way*, ver 25. He was not to be seen or observed in the matter; not he. This teaches us how deceitfully and subtilly *he sows his tares*, and insinuates *them* into the hearts of men, so slyly and imperceptibly, that they themselves will not, cannot observe that *he was the sower*. Could they be persuaded, that he has such a hand in these things, *his designs* would be frustrated. And therefore *he transforms himself into an angel of light* (a), appearing as a friend of Christ and them. His business is not to weaken the authority of scripture, or draw off professors from their reverence to it, or faith in it; much less to teach them a new religion or new faith. But he comes to give a more intelligible and rational *turn* to con-

(a) 2 Cor. xi. 14.

troverted texts, to give *light* to obscure passages, to make *seeming contradictions* consistent, to bring every thing down to *our reason*, and reconcile what has been called *mystery*, to our *clear and distinct ideas*; to excite men bravely to throw off the *yoke* which ignorant or designing *priests* have laid upon their *necks*, lay aside the *prejudice of education*, think for themselves, improve their own *faculties*, see with their *own eyes*, and incline the *young* to think, as they generally do, that *they are wiser than their fathers*. So that *satan* is not perceived in all this, where there are so many plausible pretexts to draw them aside. I cannot forbear to observe, that as the *devil*, thro' the just judgement of God, may be permitted more efficaciously to work upon men of *genius, spirit, and learning*, and to use them as his *instruments* in sowing *his tares*; so many of *those tools* have closely, and too successfully in all ages, imitated *their master* in these *methods of deception*. It deserves also to be considered, that when he employs others, *without education, learning, judgement, or any degree of sense* above their neighbours, they are no sooner infected with *poisonous errors*, but they begin to swell and bounce, fancying that none dare stand before them. This they quickly discover by a proud *elation* of themselves, a visible *contempt* of others, with several inward *disorders*, which evidently declare their original. This internal change, thro' the cunning of the *destroyer*, they themselves may take for *some supernatural effect of truth*, and be thereby hardened beyond conviction; whereas they that look on, observe it with concern and sorrow, to be one of the most dreadful and affecting proofs, as well as *fruits of a spiritual delusion*.

The season when the *Tares* were sown, was when *men slept*, ver. 25. When ministers grow indolent and careless, forgetting the flock, and professors secure and stupid, neglecting their Souls: This is their sin, and it is the enemies opportunity. When men come to be glutted with the *truth*, weary of it, they soon begin to slight and loath it, they grow daily more barren under it, and feeling no effects of it in their hearts, they are willing to let it go. And therefore it is but *just* with God, to give up *them who received not the truth in the love of it, to strong delusions, that they may believe a lie*. 2 Thes. ii. v. 10, 11. Satan shall not be restrained,

strained, and he will not lose so favourable an opportunity. Wherefore he sows his *seed*, and is himself *unperceived*; and the *tares* meeting with hearts suited to them, and disposed to receive them, take root, grow up, bring forth fruit in abundance, and sometimes grow formidable, appearing in all the *corners of the field*, yea, all over it.

The *servants* observed the *tares* sprung up, when it was too late. They ought to have watched before they were sown. They were not however deceived, nor did they out of a *mistake* fancy that tares were growing up, when they were not: No, *they saw them, knew them, and distinguished them, and that certainly and truly, from the good seed*, ver. 26, 27. This clearly shews us, I think, three things; that *these tares* were not *heathens*, open adversaries, but men living within the pale of the church, and professing faith in Christ. That they were not such whom we commonly call *hypocrites*, acknowledging the truth, but denying the power of it, or who under the colour of a publick profession secretly *work iniquity*. For such are not so easily perceived. While their iniquity is hid, none should think them *hypocrites*, none can know them to be such but God. And when their sinful way is known, they are no longer *hypocrites*; and the rule is plain how the church is to deal with them. But that they are *persons of dangerous principles*, which, under the colour of truth, naturally and necessarily lead to bad practices. They may not hold any *tenets* directly teaching, or which in any sense patronize, any thing which is commonly called *immorality*. But yet their errors draw men off from *the principle, means, rule, and end* of gospel obedience; and are failures in, or inconsistent with the faith and holiness which our Lord requires. Let the reader compare this, with what was said above, for his abundant satisfaction.

The *servants* are brought in *asking their master*, with wonder, *whence the field had the tares*, since such consequences could not surely be deduced, nor such fruit spring from the good seed. It would seem they did not reflect upon their own drowsiness and negligence. Being told, *that an enemy had done this*, they asked him further, *wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?* ver. 27, 28. It is plain they did not rashly judge them to be *tares*, *this* they saw. Nor

did

did they discover any *malice* against them, or *delight* in their destruction. But they thought, and that rightly, that *the tares* were a disgrace and curse to the field, and that they might be hurtful to *the good seed*. And since they were not of his sowing, they imagined it might be for his honour if *they were gathered up*; and therefore desire to know his will. Their Lord answers them in the negative, subjoining a reason, *lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them*, ver. 29.

It is observable, that our Saviour gives no particular explication of *this part* of the parable, though we may think it needed to be explained, as much as *the other parts*. By that he teaches us, that many things in a parable may be added purely for *the decorum* of it; that every circumstance is not to be answered by something in *the explanation*, or that this was not *the point* he designed to instruct them in from it. However, one at least of the reasons, why he would not allow of *their gathering up the tares*, was, that tho', in most cases, they might clearly distinguish betwixt the tares and the wheat; yet in some others there was *danger* of a *mistake*. Many might receive *some tares* with the good seed, and yet *the good seed* might prevail. Others might receive *several errors* of a dangerous nature in their heads, and from several causes plead for them, who *receive them not practically*, but in the whole of their *lives* shew that *the good seed* was growing in their hearts. Some may, in *their younger years*, thro' their education or otherwise, have sucked in *the tares*, before they could distinguish betwixt *them* and *the good seed*; to whom God may, according to *his purpose of election*, reveal the truth with power, enclining and enabling them to reject *the tares* and receive *the good seed*, by which they may be renewed in heart and life; and therefore would not have them *gathered up*. Besides, *the drift* of the parable was to declare that there should be a *mixture* in the visible church, in less or more, in all ages, even to the end of the world; that *offences must needs come*, and that there should not be a thorow separation till the day of judgement.

The harvest, is the end of the world, ver. 39. *When the son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, and sit upon the throne of his glory, when all nations shall*

shall be gathered before him, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd doth the sheep from the goats. Matt. xxv. ver. 31, 32. The sower shall then be the judge.

The reapers, are the angels, who shall be employed on that great occasion, to gather out of the field (here called his kingdom) all the tares of every kind, many of which lived unobserved here.

They shall gather out, says our Lord, all things that offend Πάντα τὰ σκάνδαλα, all offences, a metonymie for all that have offended others, or have been offended themselves. This word is frequently, if not always, in the new testament used, to express that kind of offence at any thing which may be an occasion of erring from the truth, or stumbling and falling in our way. Or in the words of Solomon, which may cause the righteous to go astray in an evil way, Pro. xxviii. ver. 10. It is plain, from the very next clause, that this is the meaning of the word in this verse: since they that offend are distinguished from them that work iniquity, or the vitious and immoral. The design of the parable confirms this, as well as many other texts. Wo to the world because of offences, saith our Saviour, Matt. xviii. ver. 7. It is impossible but that offences must come, Luke xvii. ver. 1. The same word is found in both places. The man by whom they come, is he who saith or doth any thing to or before his brother, designedly or not, to turn him from the faith, seduce him into dangerous error, discourage him in the way of holiness, or draw him unto sin. They that are offended, are such, who, either wander out of the way of truth, stumble and fall in it, or are brought into a wavering, unsettled state, ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth, 2 Tim. iii. ver. 7. This often proves his ruin: whereas, he that gives the offence, is guilty of his own sin and his brothers too. Christ himself is the great σκάνδαλον, stone of stumbling, and rock of offence, 1 Pet. ii. ver. 7, 8. He was set for the fall as well as for the rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that should be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed, Luke ii. ver. 34, 35. Our Lord knew this well, and therefore concluded his answer to John's disciples with these words; Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended

in me, Matt. xi. ver. 6. The chief offences, in all ages of the church, have been taken at him. Some have been offended at his *natures*, others at his *person*. Some have stumbled upon his *meanness*, others upon his *dignity and glory*. The Jews of old, and at this day, are offended to think, that a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, should pretend to be their *Messiah*; and many hereticks of the first ages, could not, would not believe that the son of God became man, suffered and died, they thought this so unworthy of him. Others, both of old and of late, are offended at his *divinity*, they cannot, will not believe, that the Son is co-essential with the Father, and that he thought it no robbery to be equal with God, Phil. ii. ver. 6. Though he expressly said, at several times, several things which he neither could nor would have said, had not this been true. Many every where have been offended at his *doctrines, precepts, ordinances, grace, cross, people, &c.* and all of them have thereby been turned out of the way of faith and holiness.

And all that work iniquity. ver. 41. which iniquities are either the genuine fruit of their opinions; for tares produce tares, as wheat doth wheat. Or we may rather understand the wicked, and the sinner, which also live within the verge of the visible church. Not every one that sins, or commits iniquity, for all are sinners, even the best, every day; but he who is the servant of sin, Rom. vi. ver. 16. who is habitually wicked in the general course of his life, even tho' it might not be known by others; or the profane, or more avowedly vicious.

Under these two characters are all the wicked in the visible church comprehended. They are joined together, and that deservedly; for both are *unrighteous*, and both shall receive the wages of their *unrighteousness*. The first sort 'tis true might be outwardly blameless, as to gross immoralities; the other might be very orthodox: But both must depart; the first for *unbelief*, the last for *disobedience*. Those would not bring down their minds to receive the truth; these would not work up their hearts to the practice of holiness. The first reject Christ as a prophet, wresting his words, and contradicting his doctrines; the last, as a king, slighting his authority, and fulfilling the lusts of their own hearts. Those,

whatever they pretend, never come up to true *evangelical holiness*; nor have they that faith whereby they may *believe to salvation*. In a word, both are unbelievers, both disobedient; and therefore, *both shall depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*. Mar. xxv. ver. 41. They are the *children of the wicked one*, and shall, as it is meet, *be, and be punished* with their father.

Whereas *the children of the kingdom* shall then be received unto that happy state prepared for them. *Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father*. In speaking to which, we shall

- I. Consider the character, of the *children of the kingdom*, they are here called *righteous*.
- II. Their happiness, *they shall shine forth as the sun*.
- III. The state or place of this their glory and happiness, *the kingdom of their Father*.
- IV. Offer a thought or two, upon the epiphonema, or conclusion, *he that hath ears to hear, let him hear*.

And then apply the whole in some uses.

I. Let us consider the present character of the children of the kingdom, they are here called *righteous*.

This word is both in scripture and in common conversation used to signify those that are, or are to be esteemed righteous, either in the sight of God or men. In the last sense, sometimes it signifies those who are innocent and unblameable, as to any particular case only, *Dent. xxv. ver. 1*. Or who have done others no evil; thus *Isbosheth* was a righteous person, *2 Sam. iv. ver. 11*. Sometimes they are such who are to be so esteemed by men. Thus all persons are to be esteemed *righteous* as to any accusation or charge brought against them, till the *circumstances, evidence, or confession* of the party prove him guilty: and it is a most unrighteous thing in any to judge otherwise. And thus also all persons making a *credible profession*, are, in the judgement of charity, to be reputed

ted *righteous*, till by their known *heresies* or *practice*, they give them reason to alter their minds.

But most frequently the *righteous* in the new testament, are they who are so, and accounted such before God. The scripture speaks of two sorts of *righteousnesses*, upon the account of which men are judged *righteous* in the sight of their judge.

There is a *legal perfect righteousness*, consisting in an absolute conformity to the whole law of God. To this it is required that the *righteous* person be personally and perpetually perfect in all respects required by the law, complying with all its demands, as to matter and manner, without any the least failure, in any circumstance, in thought, word, or deed, either by sins of omission or commission. Were any *righteous* with this kind of *righteousness*, they would need no other, but should live in and by it, for the man that doth them shall live in them, Gal. iii. ver. 12. But no meer man since the fall, is, or can be *righteous* in this sense. There is none *righteous*, no not one, Rom. iii. ver. 10. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. ver. 23. If we, even believers, say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 1 John i. ver. 8. The wise man assures us, that there is not, even, a just man upon earth, that doth good, and sinneth not. Eccles. vii. ver. 26.

There is an *evangelical righteousness*, which is of a quite different kind from the former; so called, because it is declared and required by the gospel, promised and given in the new covenant. This *righteousness* consists of that which is graciously imputed, powerfully infused, and, by the assistance of the spirit, duly improved. In this sense, *justified* and *sanctified* persons, and they only, are *righteous*.

But without going farther, we may learn the character of the children of the kingdom, and wherein their *righteousness* consists from the context. And that both

1. Negatively: And
2. Positively.

1. Negatively.

The children of the kingdom receive not the tares. The children of the wicked one do indeed receive them, believe and plead

plead that they are the *good seed*. They wrest the word of God, putting new and unnatural *senses* upon it, turn it to subserve purposes for which it was never designed, to make it speak their sense, and countenance their *errors*; and thereby make our Lord the patron of *falsehood*, which is a most *unrighteous thing*. But the children of the kingdom refuse the *tares*. They are not carried about with every wind of doctrine; much less do they give way to *itching ears*, desiring to hear any thing but the *plain, simple, truths of the gospel*. Having received the *sincere milk of the word*, 1 Pet. ii. ver. 2, they find all opinions contrary to it *tasteless*, and *hurtful*; and therefore they shut their ears and hearts against them. Having *tasted the old wine*, they refuse the *new*, because they know the *old is better*. These are evidently *acts of righteousness*. And it cannot be too much regarded, that amongst all those, who, either in the old or new testament, are called *sincere, upright, blameless, or righteous*, there is not one of them, *no not one*, who received false opinions, and heterodox notions, or swerved from the faith of the church of God, according to the measure of the revelation they were blessed with, in their several ages; *but understood and held fast the rule of faith*.

The children of the kingdom *offend not*. They who do, either *offending* others, or *stumbling themselves*, are guilty of *unrighteousness*, in leaving the paths of truth, and drawing others after them. But the children of God are not *offended in Christ, his person, natures, states, offices, doctrines, institutions, laws, people, or cross*. So far from it, that *Christ himself*, and every *thing he said, promises, requires, and does*, are *precious*, exceedingly so to them, 1 Pet. ii. ver. 7. They heartily love his *name, image, interests, and people*. These are all *righteous acts*. Nor do they *offend* others, laying a *stumbling block* before them, to discourage them, turn them out of their way, or cause them to fall in it. They that profess the truth, walking agreeably to it, and charitably bearing with the infirmities of their weaker brethren, abridging or denying themselves of something which they might lawfully do, for their sakes, can never be the *sinful occasion* of any man's fall.

The children of the kingdom *work not iniquity*. The *tares* do so, which shews *their unrighteousness*. But as for them, they

they walk not in the counsel of the ungodly, they stand not in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful, Psal. i. ver. 1. When sinners entice them, they consent not, Prov. i. ver. 10. Nor do they turn unto the paths that lead to death. All these are righteous things.

That this is the character of the *children of the kingdom*, is manifest, from the opposition made betwixt them and the *tares*. That which made the *tares* the children of the wicked one, can be no part of the character of the *righteous*. Let it however be remembered, that the children of God, are not in this life perfect, even in this *negative righteousness*: no, but the habitual *bent* of their soul, and the general *course* of their deportment, are constantly opposite to the things mentioned. They may have transgressed, or may transgress in all these, not only before conversion, but after it; yet still the *bias* of their hearts leads them the other way. God may permit his children for a time, for ought I know, not only to *doubt of some necessary truth*, but to receive some of the *tares*; and may afterwards *give them repentance, to the acknowledgement of the truth*, 2 Tim. ii. ver. 25. They shall not die in unbelief, or dangerous errors. They may sometimes *give offence* to others, or *be offended* themselves, but God will recover them to a better mind. They may sometimes *fall*, and that grievously; there are few acts of gross immorality, which some or other of the children of the kingdom, have not sometimes committed. There are many more *instances* of this sort recorded in scripture, of the most eminently godly, than of their wandrings from the faith; for of their opposition to it, in any thing, at least, that is material, I find not one single one. But *when they fall, they arise again*, they are brought to a sense of the evil of their sins, they are grieved and humbled for them, and turn from them. Under all their failings, they are habitually set against sin, all sin, as sin; *for they hate every false way*, Psal. cxix. ver. 104. If they do at any time sin, they do what they *would not*, and can with the apostle enter their protestation, *that it is no more they that do it, but sin that dwelleth in them.* Rom. vii. ver. 15.

2. Positively.

The children of the kingdom, 1. *Hear, understand, receive and keep the good seed*, the word of truth. Hearing is necessary to work faith in them, for *faith cometh by hearing*, Rom. x. ver. 17. The hearing the word preached, to say the least, is more frequently blessed to produce a true active faith, than the reading it. They understand what they hear, else they hear in vain; the preacher being no better to them than a barbarian.

And yet misunderstanding is certainly much worse. They *receive the seed* also, laying it up in their hearts, embracing it as truth, the truth of God, *which effectually worketh in them that believe*, 1 Thess. ii. ver. 13. They chuse it, ruminate upon it, let it sink down, digest it, and thereby turn it to their spiritual life and nourishment. So that *attention, knowledge, assent, and delight* are all necessary, and all found in them. They receive all *the good seed*, the whole word of God, as his word, making no objections. They ask no other *reason or ground* of faith, but *the authority* of God speaking to them in the scriptures. They are humble, docile, tractable hearers, not allowing themselves to cavil at *the simplicity, obscurity, or imperspicuity* of the scripture style, *the sublimity* of the doctrines, or *spirituality* of the precepts there revealed. They are afraid of indulging any thoughts of *the Bible*, that might reflect either upon *it self*, or *the author*. They quarrel not with the great truths of the gospel, as *with hard sayings, which none can bear*, Joh. vi. ver. 60. Nor do they in a proud, or unbelieving way, cry out, *how can these things be*, John iii. ver. 9. Much less do they refuse to believe what *is revealed*, because they know not *the manner* of things, which is not revealed. But they *receive the word*, endeavour to know it in its true meaning, in the use of all lawful and appointed means, praying for divine illumination, to make them understand what is obscure or difficult, and for grace to improve what they know. In fine, they entertain and use the scriptures as their *light, rule, food, support, and comfort* in life and death. These are surely *acts of righteousness*, to receive and improve the good seed, for such happy purposes.

If it be asked, How shall we, among so many parties, and so various and contrary opinions about the scriptures, be sure, that we rightly understand them, and are not mistaken?

Ans. A great many places are so easy and clear, that an ordinary capacity, if there is but an honest mind, can hardly miss the true sense. As to those passages that are obscure, difficult, and hard to be understood, of which, it must be owned, there are many; they are either not so necessary to be known, but that we may be ignorant of them without danger; or they may be explained by other texts, where the same subject is more distinctly and plainly handled. But as to these, if the children of God cannot understand them at all, they do not therefore lose a reverence for that word of God, peevishly disregard what they know, or lay all aside as uncertain and unintelligible. But they give a general assent unto them, as true and good, being the words of God; and they may learn something from them, tho they cannot fathom their depth. In this case, they are content to own their ignorance, wait and pray for the direction of the spirit in the use of means. They dare not be rash and bold in interpreting them, much less wickedly pervert them to their own destruction, 2 Pet. iii. ver. 16. They presume not to turn them against any known truth, or any part of the analogy of faith; or set them up against more plain, easy phrases that more frequently occur; or, without apparent cause, admit of any sense, contrary to the opinions of the pious and learned, who have lived before them. Modesty in these things, I take to be a great virtue. But as to all that is necessary to be believed, known, and done, in order to salvation, they are so clearly, perspicuously, and plainly revealed, in some place or places of the word, that even persons of mean capacities, may come, in the diligent use of ordinary means, to the certain knowledge of them, and of the words, phrases, and propositions in which they are delivered. This was, and is, the constant doctrine of all the protestant churches, in opposition to the necessity of having an human infallible judge of controversy, which is one of the chief pillars of popery. Nor can a truly serious person soberly bring himself to doubt of this, without a wicked impeachment, either of the goodness of God that he would not,

or of the *wisdom* of God that he could not, deliver his mind, in things *necessary to all his people*, in such a way, as to be *certainly understood by them all*. Besides, if this be denied, the titles given to the scriptures, that they are *a light*, *a rule*, &c. are manifestly absurd. Yet let it be still remembered, that the illumination of the Holy Spirit, to *open our eyes, to behold the wonders of his word*, and to shine upon the word, that the *enlightened eye* may more clearly perceive it, is absolutely necessary to the getting such a knowledge, and working such a faith in us, as will be sufficient for our salvation.

This privilege all and every child of the kingdom hath, which will secure him from finally falling from any *necessary* truth, or continuing in, and under the power of any *damnable* error; for so saith the apostle, *John*, expressly, when warning professors against *seducers*, 1 Joh. ii. ver. 27. *But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you; and ye need not that any man teach you: But as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him, Christ, or in it, the anointing which teacheth you the truth.*

2. The children of the kingdom are *begotten again by the word of truth*, James i. ver. 18. They are regenerated, and renewed in the spirit of their minds, by the *Holy Ghost* working with the word, Tit. iii. ver. 5. By their regeneration they become *children* which they were not before. They could not be the children of the kingdom without this. For except a man be born again, he cannot so much as see the kingdom of God; either his kingdom among men, or that above. The word is the *incorruptible seed*, which being sown, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, awakens the unconverted elect, convincing them of sin, humbling them for it, working that godly sorrow which shall never be repented of, 2 Cor. vii. ver. 10. Producing a fear of what may follow; a hatred of sin, all sin, as sin; a desire of deliverance, a firm resolution to turn to God, and betake themselves to him who is made of God unto his people *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption*, 1 Cor. i. ver. 30. to depend upon him, as the author and finisher of faith, Heb. xii. ver. 2. who is exalted as a prince and a saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness

forgiveness of sins, Acts iii. ver. 31. And who can enable all that come unto him to live and walk with God by faith, in all the ways of truth and holiness. Thus far *the Spirit worketh with the word*, and *the elect work with and under the Spirit*. These are all manifestly *righteous acts*. When things are brought to this, *a day of God's power passeth on them*, and *his almighty arm is revealed*, in making them willing to close with a Saviour for salvation, *efficacious might is put forth* to work the saving change in them; *they are born again*, Joh. iii. ver. 3. *A new heart is given unto them*, and *a new spirit is put within them*, Ezek. xxxvi. ver. 26. *The Holy Spirit is given them*, to be in them a well of water springing up unto everlasting life, Joh. iv. ver. 14. The root, principle, and habits of all inherent righteousness, are then infused. And these are the first blessed fruits of *the good seed*. Nor can any man work works truly righteous without that. For as is the principle, so are the acts; as is the tree, so is the fruit; as is the heart, so is the life. A new heart naturally produceth a new life; and tho there may be some external reformation, without an internal thorow change, yet is this never called righteousness, nor is it acceptable to God without the other. *Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt*. There is no evangelical righteousness then without or before regeneration.

3. The children of the kingdom, are *justified* persons, declared and accounted *righteous*. As they cannot be the children of God in any sense before they are *born again*; no more can they be *heirs* without or before *justification*. Can children of *wrath*, who are actually under a *sentence of condemnation*, Joh. iii. ver. 18. be *heirs of God*? Can those who are justly exposed to hell-fire, for their manifold wickednesses, as all the not justified are, be *righteous* or called so in the sight of *him* who is their judge? What, all the children of the kingdom, are *adopted children*. They are naturally *aliens, strangers, foreigners, bred up under another father in another family*; but have *power given them to become the sons of God*, Joh. 1. 12. *They receive the adoption of sons*, Gal. iv. 5. Now adoption never preceeds, but is included in, or immediately accompanies justification. In a word, no man under the condemnation of the law of God, can

be *righteous* before him; and therefore it is evident that the children are *justified* before they can be called *righteous*. And seeing the judgement of God is according to truth, he cannot declare any man *righteous* who is not so, for this would be to judge unjustly: therefore it is plain, that the *justified* must have a *righteousness* upon the account of which, they may be in truth declared *righteous*. This *righteousness* is not of our selves, nor in our selves: for all our *righteousnesses* are as filthy rags, Isa. lxiv. ver. 6. even the *righteousnesses* of the prophet himself; but these can never *justify*. And therefore it is self-evident, that if we are justified in this life, and cannot be justified without a *righteousness*; and our own *righteousness* cannot justify it self, or us; then are we justified upon the account of the *righteousness* of another. Now this alone is the *righteousness* which is, by the faith of Christ, who is *Jehovah our righteousness*, Jer. xxiii. ver. 6. And this is made ours, by the grace of God imputing it to us, For blessed is the Man to whom the Lord imputeth *righteousness* without works, Rom. iv. ver. 6. and by faith receiving and applying it; as the Apostle frequently declares. Christ is made of God unto us for *righteousness*, 1 Cor i. ver. 30. And we are made the *righteousness* of God in him. 2 Cor. v. ver. 21. He, did not only bear our sins, and was made a curse for us to redeem us from the curse, Gal. iii. ver. 10. but he fulfilled the law, and obeyed for us that we might be justified. For if by one man's offence, death reigned by one; much more they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of *righteousness*, shall reign in life, by one Jesus Christ. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners: so by the obedience of one shall many be made *righteous*, Rom. v. ver. 18, 19. Christ is the end of the law for *righteousness* to every one that believeth, Rom. x. ver. 4. It was the *righteousness* of Christ alone, in which the apostle desired to be found, Psal. iii. ver. 8, 9. These, and many other texts, make it evident, that the apostle did not think, that the pardon of sin alone is justification; no, he speaks of a *righteousness* whereby we are justified. Now pardon is not *righteousness*, and remission of sin, though it discharges from guilt, yet it makes none *righteous*. Seeing then all that are pardoned are declared *righteous* also, it follows, that when God justifies, he imputeth *righteousness*, and pardoneth sins at the same time. And if the elect are justified upon their believing,

believing, when they have no evangelical righteousness at all, for all acceptable obedience, is the obedience of faith, then are they *justified by, and because of the righteousness* and merits of *Christ* alone. Thus God is said to *justify the ungodly*, Rom. iv. ver. 5. Those that are so in themselves, and before they are *justified*, tho afterward they are sanctified and made godly.

The *convinced sinner* never did, nor can find any true rest and quiet but in *this righteousness*. Nor was, nor ever shall any *man ever be justified, sanctified, or saved* without it. This was the doctrine of all the *reformed churches*; and had a mighty influence into the first reformation, in opposition to the *indulgences, absolutions, penances, pilgrimages*, and other such *methods* of quieting the awakened consciences of men in the *papacy*. And the holy lives, and peaceful deaths of them that embraced it, are evident proofs, that it is so far from giving countenance to licentiousness; that it wrought more powerfully in them to produce universal holiness and obedience, as well as peace and joy, than those novel opinions that have too much prevailed since. *Luther* laid such a stress upon it, as to say, *Amisso articulo justificationis, simul amissa est tota doctrina christiana*. If this be lost, Christianity goes with it. There are some among us, who tell us, with an air as if they knew every thing, *that they know nothing of imputed righteousness*; which I verily believe, nor of any other. But when men come to be sensible of *sin*, and its consequences, the *spirituality and extent* of the divine law, the *holiness and justice* of God, with the *imperfection* of all their own *righteousness*, they will have other thoughts of this matter. In such a case they are like *Noah's dove*, finding no rest for the sole of her foot, but in *Christ the blessed ark*. Nor can they see any *righteousness* but his alone, in which they may appear with peace or safety before their great judge. Even *Bellarmino*, the champion for justification by works, when he came to die, saw how unsafe it was to trust to them, and therefore was for looking for the mercy of God in *Christ* alone. These and the like, are the thoughts of dying men; and of all men who remember that God declareth none *righteous*, but those who are so; and that no *righteousness*; but what is in all respects *perfect*, will cover and hide all

our imperfections, when we are called before the bar of the most righteous judge.

4. The children of the kingdom are *sanctified persons*. They receive *not the grace of God in vain*. The grace that is given is improved. *The well that is in them springs up*. The seed that was sown takes root, and appears bringing forth fruit, even all the fruits of the spirit, which are in all *goodness, righteousness, and truth*, Eph. iii. ver. 9. This is a *righteous thing* to improve their talents. Hence are they denominated *righteous*, for *he that doth righteousness is righteous*, 1 John iii. ver. 7. In the parable, the good seed brought forth fruit after its kind. Wheat produceth wheat. The children walk according to a righteous rule, obey a righteous law, believe righteous promises, and depend upon a righteous God, according to a righteous covenant, and do righteous things. They labour to give every one his due, to God that which is God's, and to man that which is man's. This is undoubtedly *righteousness*. They are diligent in *first table* duties, they fear and love God, are careful in his worship, and all the acts of piety; they are *devout and religious*. Nor do they forget the *second table* of the law, but carry themselves with justice, equity, mercy, and truth to their neighbour, *doing to all as they would be done by*, Mat. vii. ver. 12. They are *just and honest* in the sight of all men. They remember also that they should live *soberly and temperately*; keeping their bodies, which are the temples of the holy Ghost, pure and undefiled; and *washing their souls in the fountain opened for sin, and for uncleanness*, Zech. xiii. ver. 1. Having put on the Lord Jesus Christ, they make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. Rom. xiii. ver. 14. They know, that the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teacheth them these things, Tit. ii. ver. 11, 12. These are all *works of righteousness*, wrought by them, but wrought also in them, by him who works all their works in them, *Isai. xxvi. ver. 12. Working in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure*, Phil. ii. ver. 13. This is what is commonly called our *inherent and personal righteousness*, which, if we take it for that which is *habitual*, and that which is *actual*, is the same with our *sanctification*, differing from it only in name. Where this is not, it is a sure proof, that persons are not righteous in any

any of the former senses. For new acts naturally spring from new habits, and a new life. A new heart will infallibly shew it self in a new conversation. That faith that *justifies* will certainly *sanctify* also; or in other words, that faith by which men are *justified* before God, will surely *justify* itself before men. He who makes *Christ unto us for justification*, will also make him *unto us for sanctification*. We readily grant, that believers from *these works of righteousness*, are frequently in scripture stiled *righteous*: but then it must be remembred, that none are said to be *righteous* before God, but such as are *justified* also. *Inherent, personal righteousness*, of the right stamp, is never found in any, but those *blessed persons to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works*, Rom. iv. ver. 6.

In all these the children of the kingdom are *sincere, unfeigned, and hearty*; not *hypocrites* and *pretending* only. Their duty, with them, is *heart work*. They do not, cannot satisfy themselves with an external shew and outward appearance of religion be it never so splendid, but they do what they do with *their might*. They profess not one thing and do another; but heart, word, and action agree.

They perform all these works from a renewed heart, an inward principle of love to God, and true faith in a Saviour; and that upon gospel-motives, in a gospel manner, for gospel ends, and by the assistance of grace promised in, and communicated by the Gospel. All these, as well as the matter of the acts, go to the making up of *that sincere obedience* which God will accept. And where these are not, we shall not be afraid to say with some of the Fathers, that all good works, (which may seem so, are called so, or are indeed materially so) tho performed with all *the sincerity*, which an unrenewed sinner can possibly have, are, at least, but *splendida peccata, shining sins*; or with *the church of England* *, for *that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but that they have the nature of sin*.

5. The children of the kingdom, *continue steadfast and unmoveable, unshaken and constant* in their Way. They persevere unto the end, both in faith and holiness. This is sup-

* Article xiii.

posed in the parable. The good seed grows up to maturity and perfection. If a man professing himself to be, or who is esteemed righteous, should fall away from the truth, and turn from his righteousness, and commit iniquity; all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned, in his fruit that he hath sinned shall he die, Ezek. xviii. ver. 24. But the children of the kingdom, the truly righteous shall hold on their way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger, Job xvii. ver. 9. The path of the just, is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day, Prov. iv. ver. 8. Grace, like seed, is of a growing nature, which will spring up to perfection. Therefore the righteous will add to their faith virtue, to their virtue knowledge, patience, temperance, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity, 2 Pet. i. ver. 5. 7. Believers do what the apostle did, even forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before, pressing towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in CHRIST JESUS, Phil. iii. ver. 13, 14. Those that are regenerate, justified and sanctified, shall never fall into total or final apostacies from faith or holiness, whilst the foundation of the Lord stands sure (a), or as long as there is power enough in God to keep them. For so saith the Apostle Peter, in so many words, when speaking of them, who are begotten again unto a lively hope, to an incorruptible inheritance; that they are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, 1 Pet. i. ver. 3---5.

Thus you have heard the character of the children of the kingdom, they are righteous. We have shewn also in what senses they are righteous, or wherein their righteousness consists, and that from the parable it self. The good seed must be received, understood, and kept, before it can produce fruit. It must be the means of the regeneration of the righteous, otherwise they cannot be children at all. Heirs of wrath, while they are such, cannot possibly be heirs of God; and therefore all must have a righteousness given them, whereby they may have a claim and title to the inheritance, before they can be children of the kingdom. The good seed, sprung up, and was perceived to bring forth fruit, otherwise it had answered no valuable end,

(a) 2 Tim. ii. 9.

nor could those that received it, have been called *righteous*, when guilty of so manifold unrighteousnesses, as *hiding their Lord's talent in a napkin* (a); or *receiving the grace of God in vain* (b). And the good seed in the parable is supposed to have sprung up to ripeness and maturity before the harvest, if it had not, it would not have been fit for the barn or garner.

This is a very glorious character indeed, and becoming the children of the kingdom. In it there is an admirable mixture of *grace and duty, faith and obedience, the assistance of God, and the endeavours of the creature*. Here we may see *grace, mercy, and power justifying, sanctifying, and keeping the children of the kingdom*: and yet the children *believing, running, fighting, striving, working out their own salvation, and keeping themselves*. Here we find them, *laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, and laying hold on eternal life*, 1 Tim. vi. ver. 19. And yet *looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, and expecting and praying for mercy of him at that day*, 2 Tim. i. ver. 18. We now proceed,

II. To consider *the righteous man's happiness*. *He shall shine forth as the sun*; a phrase expressive of the glory and dignity to which he shall be exalted, notwithstanding all present imperfections.

In this life, there are remains of corruption in the breast, which often stirs, captivates, defiles, and overcomes *the righteous*; and is so violent sometimes, that they do not know what to make of themselves. *The law in their members wars against the law in their minds, and leads them captive, &c.* Rom. vii. ver. 23. Sometimes *lust conceives and brings forth sin*, Jam. i. ver. 15. And one sin naturally leads on to another, either to cloak, extenuate, or deny it; or else lust pushes on for a little more gratification. These are not *the works of righteousness*, but shew the too great prevalency of sin in them. So that they often groan out those words of the Apostle, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death*. Such things make others, as well as themselves to suspect their state. I have heard of a very holy man, who used to say, he should

(a) Luke xix. ver. 20. (b) 2 Cor. vi. ver. 1.

not know what to think of himself, were it not for the 7th Ch. to the Romans. These sins and infirmities much darken *the true glory* of the *righteous* in this world.

The *best* and most *useful* of the saints, may in our state of trial, be censured, defamed, abused, and have things laid to their charge which their souls abhor. These may hurt their reputation, marr their usefulness, and sully their just character; so that in this world, *their worth* is not known.

The righteousness of Christ, whereby the believer is made *righteous* before God, and for which he is declared and accounted to be so by him, which is the saints chief *beauty, ornament, and glory*, cannot be seen by others. So that in this life he doth not *shine*.

The *Spirit* which dwells in *the righteous*, and *his graces*, cannot be discerned by others, any more than *the soundness* of their hearts, and their *integrity* before God. Their many failures, omissions, and other iniquities, make those that observe, as well as themselves, doubt of their sincerity. Besides these, the latent, hidden, unsubdued remains of *hypocrisy*, and the other unmortified *lusts* of the flesh and of the mind; their consciousness of daily sins, when no eye seeth them, may obscure the evidence of *their unfeigned honesty* of heart. So that in this state *their intrinsic excellency* appears not.

In this world, the *righteous* may be slighted and contemned because of the meanness of their parts, the slowness of their capacities, the paucity of their gifts; as well as their outward poverty, the natural obliquity of their constitutions, and other visible imperfections. So that *their beauty and glory* is tarnished. But at last *they shall shine*. Now, even in this life, *they are the sons of God*, but it doth not yet appear *what they shall be*, 1 Joh. iii. ver. 2. But when *the harvest* comes, it will appear that they are,

1. Justified persons, *whose sins are pardoned, whose iniquities are blotted out, and whose transgressions are covered*, Psal. xxxii. ver. 12. But remission and pardon tho they may absolve from punishment, yet (as we observed above) they make no man just or *righteous*. A criminal, tho pardoned by the judge or king, is not for that less a rogue than he was: But God pardons none but those to whom he gives *a righteousness*, upon the account of which, he may justly declare

declare them to be indeed *righteous*. Well, it shall then be seen, that the children are compleatly *righteous*, thro' the *righteousness* of Christ imputed to them, even the *righteousness* which is of God by faith, Phil. iii. ver. 9. That they are covered with the robe of *righteousness* and with the garment of *salvation*, Is. lxi. ver. 10. Which robe covers all defects, hides all deformities, and makes their persons beautiful and comely, through his comeliness put upon them, Ezek. xvi. ver. 14. Oh! how shall the *righteous* then shine? when they shall have washed their garments in the blood of the lamb, and appear without spot, having on the wedding garment, decked as a bride, in raiment infinitely more valuable than embroideries of gold, which was purchased by the obedience of Christ in his life and in his death, in order to the consummation of the marriage with her glorious Lord.

2. It shall then be manifest, that they were nobly born, of high descent, being born of God, 1 Joh. iii. 9. Renewed by the Holy Ghost, Tit. iii. ver. 5. And sanctified wholly in spirit, soul, and body, 1 Thes. v. ver. 23. Yea, that they were partakers of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. ver. 4. And discovered this by a suitable temper and walk. That they were not like whited sepulchres, fair without, but inwardly full of rottenness and impurity, Matt. xxiii. ver. 37. Then they shall appear all fair, without spot, within as well as without, Cant. i. ver. 15. They diligently followed holiness when here, Heb. xii. ver. 14. And then they shall be made perfect in it. Oh! how shall the King's daughter then shine? when it shall be known that she is all glorious within; when all her graces and faculties are perfected; and all sin, sorrow, fear, and misery, and every imperfection shall be done away. When it shall be seen, that she is compleatly renewed after the image of her Lord and Father. How splendid then shall she be?

3. It will then appear, that they were sound at heart, and upright in the sight of God; that notwithstanding all their failures, the root of the matter was still in them, Job xix. ver. 28. It will then be known that they did closely follow the truth, and contend earnestly for it, Jude ver. 3. That it was worth contending for, at the expence, and with the loss of ease, peace, reputation, goods, and life; that they did and suffered all, out of a just concern for the glory of God, a

holy tenderness for *truth*, even lesser *truths*, and out of pity to the souls of men. It will then be shewn, that they did not only receive the *truth*, but were changed into a likeness to it, and love of it. That *they hated every false way, but loved God's law, having a respect to all his commandments*, Psal. cxix. ver. 6, and 104. That tho they were sometimes entangled by temptation, yet they allowed themselves in no evil course, nor *walked willingly after the commandments* of the Flesh. It will then be manifest, that their hearts were honest, their views single, their aims fixed, their resolutions steady, their endeavours sincere, and their general course after conversion regular and holy. Oh! how shall *they shine*, when they shall be acquitted from all the false charges of *hypocrisy, design, bigotry, fury, peevishness, singularity, uncharitableness*, and it may be *worse things*, with which they were freely and plentifully loaded here. When God shall publicly declare before all, that what they did which vexed others, proceeded from their honesty, tenderness, love to God, and fear of his judgements, a disinterested concern for truth, and that they might bear an open testimony, in their sphere, against all the greater or lesser defections of their times.

4. Their good *works* shall then also appear. In this life they might *not* be known, they might be misrepresented and traduced, but then they shall be *known*, and *known to be good*. Then shall it appear, that they were found in the *faith*, and *received not the tares*, but held fast their profession in winnowing times. That their faith was of the right stamp; not a dead, lifeless, rational assent; but an operative, efficacious principle of holiness, *purifying the heart within*, Acts xv. ver. 9. *And working by love without*, Gal. v. ver. 6. It shall then be declared, that they were thriving professors, who brought forth the *fruits of the Spirit*, Gal. v. ver. 22. That they were not altogether barren, but in some measure fruitful in piety and obedience. Those *works* shall more especially be made manifest, which brought most *honour* to Christ, and were the greatest *ornaments* to their profession. Such as works of benignity, charity, and mercy, especially our hospitality, compassion, and beneficence, to Christ's needy, afflicted servants, Mat. xxv. ver. 34—37. For *I was hungry, and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink, &c.* It

is not to be forgotten that the word *righteous*, in the oriental languages, signifies the bountiful, generous, kind, and charitable man, *Psal. xxxvii. ver. 25, 26.* He that shews mercy to the poor acts *righteously*, doing as he would be done by, as well as obeying the commandments of the Lord to this purpose. Whereas the Professor who *turns away his eyes from his own flesh*, or refuses cheerfully to supply the necessities of his brethren of the household of faith, for the Lord's sake, seems not only to have divested himself of those *bowels of compassion he should put on* for all of his own species; but to give too good a proof, that his love of God, of a Saviour, and of his brethren, is cold, seeing he denies to give to each their due. The faithful, constant, and unshaken adherence of believers to the *truth*, both in faith and worship; their *rejecting* and *opposing* all corrupt mixtures, additions, or depravations in the service of God; their *keeping close* to Christ in all his ordinances, *witnessing for him* even to prisons, confiscations, banishments, gibbets, and stakes, and their acceptableness to their judge, shall then appear. It was not without reason, that a special command is given by the Spirit to write, *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them*, *Rev. xiv. ver. 13.* They that die in the Lord, or for him, are said to *rest from their labours*, that is, from all their uneasinesses, troubles, hard services, oppositions, and persecutions for his sake. And their *works do follow them*: their labours are over, but their services and sufferings go with them, the sweet remembrance, the merciful acceptance, and gracious reward of them. *For God is not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love*, *Heb. vi. ver. 10.*

How gloriously shall the *righteous then shine*, when all these things shall appear! They shall *shine forth*, ἐκλάμψουσιν, like a light that was hid, when the overshadowing body is removed. They shall shine with a *lustre*, that shall amaze themselves and others. Then it will appear *what they shall be*, even that they shall be like their glorious Redeemer, *1 John iii. ver. 2.* In this life they were indeed *righteous*, were *washed from their sins in the blood of Christ*, were the excellent ones of the earth, *Psal. xvi. ver. 3.* But their *intrinsic worth and dignity*, was so sullied or obscured, that it was not perceived,

at least not distinctly, and at all times. But then they shall appear in their true colours.

They shall shine as the sun, saith our Lord, *with a glorious, abiding, equal light*, which shall neither fade nor be overshadowed for ever. The shining of the sun is the greatest, brightest, most pleasant, and useful of all created lights, and therefore is the glory of the *righteous* compared to it, and resembled by it; with this difference, that the *sun* is the *fountain of light*, at least to our *system*, but the *fountain of light and glory* is not in the *righteous themselves*, but in *Christ their head*, for he is the *true light*. They shall shine by a borrowed light, communicated and transfused from him, to his whole body, and to every member of it. They shall shine *by him*, and *in him*, *where he is they shall be also* (a), and while there is glory in him they shall share in it. For *they shall eat and drink at his table in his kingdom*, Luke xxii. ver. 30. To him that overcometh, saith Christ expressly, *will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne*. Here is mention made of *two thrones*; the Father's throne, on which Christ sat down, *when he was glorified with that glory, which he had with the father, before the world was*, John xvii. ver. 5. The Father's throne and the Son's are one, their nature and glory the same, from eternity. The Son also hath a particular throne, as distinct from the other, which he hath as *mediator*, on which *he will grant to him that overcometh to sit with him*. The head and members shall sit on the same throne. The *righteous* shall possess the same kingdom, and partake of the same glory with their husband and Lord. They were justified by *his righteousness*; washed in *his blood*; guided, sanctified, and comforted by *his word and Spirit*; preserved by *his power*, and shall at last *shine as the sun in and with him*. Oh! how glorious shall they then appear? The *highest angels* are never said to sit upon thrones, much less on *Christ's throne*, nor in the nature of things can it be; but this honour shall all the *saints have*, and every member shall share in the glory of their all-glorious head.

(a) John xiv. 3.

The *sun of righteousness himself* was hid, his *glory* was veiled, when he *tabernacled among us*, John i. ver. 14. He was born, lived, and died under an *eclipse*; a few *beams* only of his *glory* shining forth at some times, which very few could behold, thro' the intervening humanity. The cloud was so thick, that the *essential glory of this blessed sun, who was in the form of God*, could hardly be perceived, when he *emptied himself, and took upon him the form of a servant*. But at last he *shone forth*, and now he *shines* in his own glory, and the glory of his Father. Even so, his *children* have a real *glory* upon them, and in them, even in this life; being *cloathed with the robe of righteousness*, Isai. lxi. ver. 10. And *renewed after the image of God*; but it is often not perceived, it is frequently sullied and over-clouded, for it *doth not yet appear what they shall be*; but at last they shall *shine forth as the sun*, when it appears above the horizon in a *morning without clouds*: nor shall they be *overshadowed more for ever*.

The righteous shall shine in their *whole persons*, soul and body; they shall be conformed in both to their head. When Christ was *transfigured*, as a prelude to the glory of his human nature in heaven, notwithstanding his meanness upon earth, his *countenance did shine as the sun*, and the lustre and brightness of his body, made his *raiment white as the snow*, Matt. xvii. ver. 2. As his *body* was then, and is now in heaven, so shall the *bodies* of the righteous be; for he shall *change their vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body*, Philip. iii. ver. 21. And, as they have *born the image of the earthly Adam*, they shall also *bear the image of the heavenly*, 1 Cor. 15. ver. 49. Here is comfort for the dying saint, who may be concerned for his *body*, and loth to part with it. His *vile body*, which is decaying, wasting and perishing, being a lump of corruption, shall rot, and be consumed in the grave; but it shall at last be *changed*, and made glorious and immortal, like Christ's. When *Moses* came down from the mount, his *face shone*, Exod. xxxiv. ver. 29. *Stephen's face* appeared to the council, as if it had been the *face of an angel*, Acts vi. ver. 15. But hereafter the *whole bodies* of the righteous shall shine with a greater glory, for when Christ, who is their life, shall appear, then shall they also *appear with him in glory*, Col. iii. ver. 4.

The

The time is also specified, when this shall be. *Then*, at the end of the world, *the times of the restitution of all things*, Acts i. ver. 21. In the parable it is called *the harvest*, when *the good seed* shall be grown up, fit for the barn and full ripe for glory. Then and not before. *The souls of the righteous* shall, immediately after death, *be carried by angels into Abraham's bosom*, Luke xvi. ver. 22. *and be with their Redeemer in paradise*, Luke xxiii. ver. 23. *who will receive the spirits which they commit to him*, Acts vii. ver. 59. Holy Stephen did not dream that his soul would vanish into air or die with the body. Nor did he put up his faith or prayer in vain. The happiness of *separate souls* who are with Christ, must needs be very great. But *death hath dominion over their bodies*. And the glory of *their whole persons* shall not be displayed till the resurrection, when their bodies shall be raised, and *that which was sown in dishonour and weakness shall be raised in glory and power*, 1 Cor. xv. ver. 43. When the righteous die, the happiness of their souls is not known to all; and their bodies are laid in the grave and see corruption, as well as other mens, without any difference. But when they are refined, they shall spring up again in glory *for them that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him*, 1 Thess. iv. ver. 14. Then shall they in *their whole persons*, be absolved before angels and men, and *enter into the joy of their Lord*, Matt. xxv. ver. 21. Which leads us;

III. To consider *the state and place* where they shall thus shine forth, it is, faith Christ, *in the kingdom of their father*. The glory of which in this world we can neither comprehend nor conceive. For *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entred into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*, 1 Cor. ii. 9.

What knowledge we have of this state is from the scripture. In which, that we might have some conceptions of it, for the strengthening of our faith, the supporting our spirits under present difficulties, the quickening our desires after it, and cherishing our endeavours for it; it is proposed to us under a variety of metaphors, drawn from the most glorious and desirable things known in this world. Hence it is called *a house, mansion, city, country, kingdom, &c.* To denote

denote the stability, convenience, beauty, rest, happiness, and glory of it. It is represented as a state and place of *safety and security, quiet and ease, light and joy, life and felicity, honour and glory* of everlasting continuance. The society and fellowship, the work and exercise, the privileges and immunities of it are described in beautiful and charming strains. It is the prize for which the righteous run, 1 Cor. ix. 24. It is the crown for which they fight, 2 Tim. iv. ver. 7, 8. The reward for which they strive, Matt. vii. ver. 13, 14. The end of their faith and hope, 1 Pet. i. ver. 9. These will make it the more desirable. Oh! who can imagine what these words *eternal life, eternal joy, eternal glory* mean?

In the text it is called a *kingdom*, to discover to us the convenience, safety, excellency, riches, and glory, of that blessed state and place. The *righteous*, even in this life, are *heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ*, Rom. viii. ver. 17. They are heirs of the same inheritance with their Saviour. They are *begotten again unto a lively hope, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*, 1 Pet. i. ver. 3, 4. Yea, *they are made kings by him that loved them*, Rev. i. ver. 5. But they are only *minors*, and under age living in the expectation of the inheritance. *The heir, when a child, differeth nothing from a servant*, Gal. iv. ver. 1. But at the harvest, when they shall arrive at maturity, and become of age, they shall receive the *kingdom*, being put in the actual possession of it.

It is a *kingdom prepared for them, before the foundation of the world*, Matt. xxv. ver. 34. Prepared in the counsels of the blessed three; and agreed on in the covenant of redemption: It is a kingdom purchased by Christ; his blood was a ransom to redeem the children from hell, and the price that was paid for this kingdom; our goel, our near and dear kinsman redeemed the mortgaged inheritance. It is a kingdom reserved for them who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, 1 Pet. i. ver. 4, 5.

It is here called the *kingdom of their father*, that is God. It doth not appear that the term *father*, when spoken of God, is spoken of the first person exclusively of the other two persons in the Trinity; or that it is appropriate to him, unless when it is found in contradistinction to the

son. God *the father*, is indeed, and is most frequently styled the father of the righteous; but *the son* is also their father, for every one that doth righteousness is born of him, 1 Jo. ii. ver. 29. The whole context makes it plain that it is *the son* of whom the apostle speaks. But if this term *father* were so appropriated to *the first person*, as never to be applied to *the son*, to express the relation betwixt him and his people; nothing can be drawn from it, to the Diminution of the essential dignity of *the son*. For he is not so the father of the righteous, as he is the father of Christ. If therefore *the first person* is indeed a proper father, and *the second person*, a proper, begotten, only begotten son; his coessentiality with him, is abundantly, yea, infallibly confirmed. But allowing that our Saviour here means *his own father*, which I deny not; then *the kingdom* is called his, because he prepared it for the righteous, and elected and designed them for it, Luke xii. ver. 32. And begetteth them again unto a lively hope of it, 1 Pet. i. ver. 3.

Let us not however forget, that it is elsewhere expressly called *the kingdom of Christ*. *The everlasting kingdom of our Lord and saviour JESUS CHRIST*, 2 Pet. i. ver. 11. And another apostle styles it *the kingdom of Christ and of God*, Eph. v. ver. 5. τὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τοῦ Θεοῦ. The disposition of the article shews that both these words may signify one and the same person. The words may be rendered *the kingdom of Christ even God*, that is, of Christ who is God. The kingdom is called his, because he purchased it, he gives it, John xvii. ver. 2. He appoints unto his people a kingdom, Luke xxii. ver. 29. Those that suffer with him shall reign with him, 2 Tim. ii. ver. 12. Oh! what a happy state must this be, to be raised to a kingdom prepared by the father, and purchased and given by the son? How inconceivable will their glory be, who reign as kings in the same kingdom with Christ? What a blessed place is heaven? *The Lord God almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. The glory of God and the Lamb is the light thereof. There the river of water of life, proceeds out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. There grows the tree of life. There, there shall be no more curse*, Rev. xxi. ver. 22, 23. and ch. xxii. ver. 1—3. What is true of the church of Christ, in this world, is certainly

tainly more fully accomplished to the saints in glory. *The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads : they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away, Isai. xxxv. ver. 10. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, Rev. vii. ver. 16, 17. And so shall they be ever with the Lord, 1 Theff. iv. ver. 17.* Let us now,

IV. Offer a thought or two upon the conclusion. *Who hath ears to hear let him hear.*

Our Lord well knew that this doctrine would not go down with many. Some would be so far from understanding, believing, or considering it ; that they would oppose and reject it, stumble and fall upon it. Many would not suffer themselves to think, that there can be *so much danger in error* ; or that men would *run such a risque* for a mistake, which they would plead *they could not help*. Others would fancy themselves safe whether they received the good seed, or no ; they would think the scripture is obscure, and of uncertain signification, they cannot have sufficient evidence of things revealed ; they observe, that men esteem'd learned and virtuous, are continually jangling about their opinions ; whereas there is a certainty in natural religion, the duties of morality are capable of demonstration, and therefore they would rest where they might have *sure footing* ; and as for the *gospel*, those might receive it *who can make anything of it*. There would also be many apt to flatter themselves, that *the bare receiving*, or *adhering to the good seed, gospel truths*, would be sufficient, whether they complied with *gospel precepts* or not. Well, saith our Lord, let such take their course, and wait the event. But for *him that hath ears to hear, let him hear*. For him whose heart is disposed, inclined, and enabled to hear, receive, and believe what I have said ; let him ponder it seriously, receive it with good will, believe it steadily, and improve daily by the instructions, excitations, and encouragements couched in this parable, and the explication of it.

They that do so shall find the *advantage* of it here and hereafter.

It now remains that we shut up all with some practical reflections. From what has been said, we may learn,

1. That we are not to wonder, if *we perceive that the tares are sown, yea growing in our day, yea threatening to waste the field.* These things have been, and must be. Were it not for these, our fidelity would not be approved. It is easy to believe, or say that we believe, when there is no opposition made to truth. But it is an evidence of our fear of God, and love to a Saviour, when we keep our selves clean, and are not corrupted with *fashionable error, or rampant heresy.* Our duty is to *hold fast our profession,* praying for the illumination of the holy spirit to lead us into *the meaning of the word,* and for his assistance, that *our faith and patience,* when tried, may be made manifest.

2. That *they, and they only are righteous,* who deserve the character given above. Even they who refuse the tares, hear, receive, and hold fast the good seed; who are renewed and transformed by it; who have it dwelling in them, as *the rule and ground of faith, and principle of holiness;* and who exemplify it in heart and life. Whatever men may or do think of us, none but such are, or shall be accounted righteous before God.

3. That there are *few, very few* any where, to whom *this character* may be justly applied. The best of us may be ashamed to hear, who they are, who only are righteous. But the greatest part have no just claim to be so esteemed at all. Many are so far from seriously reading *the word,* that it is become a jest to them; yea, some who are for ever *wrangling* about it, freely and without shame, declare *they never read it.* Unto others, it is the occasion of *their falling backward, being broken, and snared, and taken,* Isaï. xxviii. ver. 13. Many of those, who say they *believe* the scriptures, and in words *profess* a mighty reverence for them, yet bring their pre conceived opinions to them; and so do not only interpret them so as to tally with their abominations, but wrest and torture the scriptures to defend them, doing *this to their own destruction.* 2 Pet. iii. ver. 16.

Others

Others hear, have a rational understanding of *the good seed*, and are sound in their principles; but their religion is wholly in *their heads*, they are *meer speculative christians*, if that is not a solæcism. A great many receive *the good seed*, upon whom it has some *good effects*; yea, they *adhere* to the profession of it, and *do many things*, as *Herod*. Mark vi. ver. 20. And yet their hearts are never changed, nor their lives thoroughly reformed by it. *Shall such a faith save them?* James ii. ver. 14. *No! for faith without works is dead*, ver. 26. *He that knoweth his master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes*, Luke xii. ver. 47.

4. That though in this world, *the truly righteous* may be traduced, and slandered, and things laid to their charge of which they are ignorant: yea, though their manifold, visible infirmities, or grosser crimes, may frequently give too great reason to themselves and others to suspect their state; yet *they shall shine at last*. Their integrity and soundness of heart, their honesty and singleness in the main, the truth of their faith and obedience, as well as their justification, shall be made to appear.

5. Let *the righteous*, then take heart. The time is at hand, when a distinction shall be made between *the sheep and the goats, the wheat and the tares*. When all the charges of hypocrisy and rottenness, that are advanced against them, shall be shewn to be false. And when the wicked and the unbeliever both, with all the tares, shall be for ever separated from them. *There shall be no Canaanite nor Perizzite in the house of the Lord of hosts*, Zech. xiv. ver. 21.

6. Let *the children* rejoice in the *prospect of a kingdom*, prepared for him that *overcometh*. Let this be their comfort in life, and support in death. Which I have no reason to doubt was the case of our deceased friend, Mrs. BUNNY.

This good woman was one of those few, who live to old age, and get through the world, without any remarkable imputation upon their name. A rare thing in one of her years! She shewed herself a quiet discreet woman; and an humble, modest, peaceable, serious christian; a much rarer thing! Her character as a wife, a mother, a relative, under many trials, both of patience and prudence, is better known to

to many of you, than to me. But I seldom on these occasions say much of the dead, if it is not of their carriage and hope on a death-bed, and that to encourage believers, and excite others to consider their latter end.

If *righteousness come by the law*, this honest, old woman might have pleaded it, as much as most: but she often *disclaimed all this*, and all dependance upon it. It was *the righteousness of Christ*, in which she desired to appear. The door through which she strove to enter, was that of pardon, and free mercy in the blood of Christ, *in and through whom*, she hoped to be accepted.

She was a serious, constant *reader of the scriptures*, for many years, especially the devotional parts. I frequently found her, before she took her bed, reading in the Book of *Psalms*. Thereby she learned the exercises, trials, experiences, deliverances, and comforts of the saints, and often refreshed herself with them in her sickness. But her chief delight was in reading the 25th *Psalms*, joining in the *Psalmist's* prayers; and comforting herself with the instructions and consolations which the believer may gather from it. She had the first words of it in her mouth frequently, even to the last: *Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul, O my God I trust in thee, let me not be ashamed.*

In her last lingering sickness, I always found her calm and undisturbed. She appeared still the same, for many days, without murmurings and complaints, expressing her hope of happiness very modestly; *she had not that joy which others have had, but she was thankful she had peace*, and all her desire was, *that faith and patience might hold out.*

When she became weak and very sick, she earnestly desired her dissolution, and seemed to be pleased to hear she was so near her end. *Shall I not go over Jordan this night*, said she to those about her the night before she died? I hope the advices she then gave to her children and grandchild, which were such as might be expected from such a relation, and such a woman, when hardly able to speak, will never be forgotten.

Being asked, *if she knew whether she was going*, she answered, with much quiet, *I am going into eternity, and hope*

in the mercy of God through Christ. Being then told, that a righteousness was necessary, in which she should appear before her judge: she said, *she knew it*, giving the same answer which she had often done, *she hoped to appear in the righteousness of Christ, for she had none of her own.* I then asked her, whether I should pray with her once more, she earnestly desired it, with much affection, saying these words, *the Lord help me to join with you, for I cannot now do as I would.* And within an hour or two after died.

My advices to those she has left behind her, are, to look back and consider the mercy of having such a mother. The prayers, instructions, and example of such a woman, were much to be valued. Reflect also upon your carriage, and whether you have behaved your selves in a becoming manner to her. Most children are guilty of undutifulness to parents, though *the fifth, is the first Commandment with promise.* Remember her last words, her sickness, patience and hope; let them make a deep impression upon you. Think of dying. You may not live to her age. I often called upon you, to come and see and learn to die, to observe in your mother, what weakness, sickness, concern and thoughts of heart, death brings with it. Above all, be exhorted to betake your selves to him, *in whom you may have hope and peace, righteousness and strength, relief and comfort*, in life and death, as she appeared to have.

To conclude, Let all of us seriously and affectionately lay to heart, the different ends of the good seed and the tares. The tares may grow and flourish, in this world, yea may become formidable, and go far in rooting up the good seed. But at last, they shall be gathered out of the kingdom, and cast into a furnace of fire, where shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. There are a generation of tares, who tell us, that death is a ceasing to be, and that men and women after death know neither pleasure nor pain, till the resurrection. That when this cometh the wicked shall be condemned, and doomed to eternal death, that is, annihilation, an everlasting ceasing to be. They think it very absurd to imagine, that these words *eternal death*, should signify *eternal life and misery.* And happy were it for the most, if these

these things were true. But our Blessed Lord taught no such Divinity. He tells us, that he will say to the Goats on his left-hand, *Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*; Matt. xxv. ver. 41. And the hell is a state and place, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched, Mark ix. ver. 44, 46, 48. On the other hand the good seed, though they may be accounted hypocrites and evil doors, may be much afflicted, oppressed, slandered, and abused, yea, cast out of the field by the wicked; yet shall they be absolved, acquitted, and graciously rewarded at last when they shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their father. Let us therefore cry to God for grace to incline and enable us to receive, understand, and improve the good seed that growing up into a likeness with Christ, our dear redeemer, we may expect to share in the same glory with him for ever and ever. Amen.



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